

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

AID-05 IGA-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CU-02 EB-07 INT-05

COME-00 OPIC-03 EUR-12 /101 W

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R 111120Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1495

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 4031

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, MARR, EINV, TH

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSION WITH THAI FOREIGN MINISTER

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUMMARY: I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF A COURTESY CALL ON PICHAIRATTAKUN TO BRIEF THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA, THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE AND THE TEMCO DISPUTE. PICHAIRAT EXPRESSED HIS AND THE DEMOCRAT PARTY'S APPRECIATION FOR OUR ASSISTANCE DURING THE POST WORLD WAR II PERIOD AND SAID THAT AS FAR AS THE DEMOCRAT PARTY IS CONCERNED ANY ADJUSTMENTS WHICH MAY BE MADE IN U.S.-THAI RELATIONS WILL BE DONE IN A WAY WHICH PRESERVES OUR BASIC FRIENDSHIP AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. PICHAIRAT IS ONE OF THE BRIGHT YOUNG MEN IN THE DEMOCRAT PARTY AND VERY MUCH A COMER. HE WILL BE IMPORTANT TO US AS FOREIGN MINISTER IN THE DEMOCRAT PARTY SHADOW CABINET. END SUMMARY.

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1. I CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER PICHAIRATTAKUN MARCH 10

TO OFFICIALLY SAY GOODBYE AND ALSO TO BRIEF HIM ON MATTERS OF INTEREST TO U.S.-THAI RELATIONS. ALTHOUGH SENI PRAMOT'S DEMOCRAT GOVERNMENT FAILED TO OBTAIN A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE ON MARCH 6, PICHAI WILL CONTINUE TO OCCUPY A PROMINENT POSITION IN THE DEMOCRAT PARTY WHICH WILL APPARENTLY HEAD UP THE OPPOSITION GROUP IN THE PARLIAMENT. AS SUCH, IT IS MUCH IN OUR INTERESTS FOR HIM TO BE AWARE OF OUR POSITION ON KEY ISSUES.

U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE.

2. I LED OFF BY NOTING THAT BOTH THE DCM AND I HAD DISCUSSED WITH PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE AND THE 18-MONTH DEADLINE FOR WITHDRAWAL INCLUDED IN THE DEMOCRAT-SOCIAL AGRARIAN PARTY GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT. I SAID IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS DEADLINE WAS A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THOSE MEMBERS OF THE CABINET AND THE DEMOCRAT PARTY WHO FAVORED AN IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL AND THOSE WHO BELIEVED REDUCTIONS IN OUR FORCES SHOULD BE KEYED TO THE INDOCHINA SITUATION. PICHAI CONFIRMED THAT THIS WAS CORRECT.

3. I EXPLAINED THAT WE HAD MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF MILITARY ELEMENTS IN THAILAND. WE HAD JUSMAAG WHICH ADMINISTERED OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM; WE HAD A NUMBER OF INTELLIGENCE UNITS WHICH PROVIDE INFORMATION TO THE RTG; AND WE HAD LOGISTIC SUPPORT AND OTHER GROUPS. I ASKED IF I WAS CORRECT IN ASSUMING THAT THE 18-MONTH DEADLINE APPLIED ONLY TO OPERATIONAL AIR FORCE UNITS. PICHAI SAID THIS WAS CORRECT. HE SAID THAT FORTUNATELY NO ONE HAD ASKED FOR A DEFINITION OF "U.S.FORCES" DURING THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE SO THE GOVERNMENT, HAD IT REMAINED IN OFFICE, WOULD HAVE HAD SOME FLEXIBILITY IN DECIDING WHAT UNITS WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE BUT THIS DEADLINE WOULD DEFINITELY HAVE APPLIED TO ALL OPERATIONAL UNITS.

CAMBODIA.

4. DRAWING ON RECENT STATEMENTS BY KEY LEADERS IN WASHINGTON, I THEN BRIEFED PICHAI ON CURRENT CONDITIONS IN CAMBODIA. I
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NOTED THAT THE SITUATION IS SERIOUS AND THAT THIS YEAR WE ARE SEEING THE HEAVIEST FIGHTING EVER IN THE CAMBODIAN WAR. BOTH SIDES ARE TAKING HEAVY CASUALTIES. TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS ARE WHETHER OR NOT THE U.S. CONGRESS WILL PROVIDE THE ADDITIONAL AID REQUIRED BY THE GKR AND WHETHER THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO REPLACE CASUALTIES AND KEEP THE COMMUNISTS A SUFFICIENT DISTANCE FROM POCHENTONG AIRPORT AT PHNOM PENH. I SAID MY OWN VIEW WAS THAT PHNOM PENH COULD HOLD OUT IF THE

DEFENSIVE PERIMETER WAS MAINTAINED AT A SUFFICIENT DISTANCE TO LET THE AIRLIFT CONTINUE.

5. PICHAI SAID HE HAD RECENTLY TOLD A NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE REPORTER THAT HE WAS RELATIVELY OPTIMISTIC REGARDING CAMBODIA AND BELIEVED THE CHANCES FOR SURVIVAL WERE BETTER THAN 50/50. AT THE SAME TIME, TOP LEADERS OF THE CABINET HAD AGREED THAT "MEASURES" WERE REQUIRED TO COUNTER ANY INCREASE IN COMMUNIST INSURGENCY IN THAILAND IF THE WORST WERE TO HAPPEN NEXT DOOR.

U.S.-THAI RELATIONS.

6. PICHAI SAID AN IMPORTANT FACTOR AFFECTING THAILAND'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CAMBODIAN SITUATION IS THE VALIDITY OF THE U.S. COMMITMENT. HE SAID LEADING POLITICAL FIGURES HAVE EXPRESSED SERIOUS DOUBTS OVER WHETHER THE UNITED STATES IS STILL FOLLOWING THE PRINCIPLES OF THE NIXON DOCTRINE. I QUOTED FROM THE RECENT STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT FORD AND SAID THERE WAS NO QUESTION THAT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH WANTS TO SUPPORT CAMBODIA IF CONGRESS PROVIDES THE MEANS. I NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WAS A CERTAIN "INWARD TURNING" IN THE UNITED STATES AS A RESULT OF THE GREAT BURDEN WE HAVE SHOULDERED SINCE WORLD WAR II AND THE COMPLICATIONS OF THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS. NONETHELESS, I SAID MOST AMERICANS RECOGNIZE THAT WE CANNOT WITHDRAW FROM THE WORLD. THE UNITED STATES AND THAILAND LIVE IN A PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY. BY BEING FRANK WITH EACH OTHER, AS WE HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST, WE CAN GET THROUGH THIS PERIOD OF READJUSTMENT WITHOUT DAMAGE TO OUR FUNDAMENTAL RELATIONS.

7. PICHAI SAID THAT HE AND HIS PARTY, AND ALSO THE MAJORITY
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OF THE THAI PEOPLE, BELIEVE THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN THEIR ONLY "SINCERE ALLY" IN THE POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD. PRIME MINISTER SENI HAS HAD CLOSE CONNECTIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES FOR MANY YEARS AND IS MOST GRATEFUL FOR U.S. HELP AND FRIENDSHIP. PICHAI SAID THAT HE AND SENI "TREASURE" THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. IF THERE IS TO BE AN ADJUSTMENT IN THOSE RELATIONS, THIS WILL BE DONE AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND OF FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING.

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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

THAILAND'S FOREIGN RELATIONS.

8. I EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THESE REMARKS AND SAID THAT I FULLY AGREED THERE WAS GENUINE AFFECTION AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. WE HAD NO DESIRE TO DOMINATE THIS AREA OR ANY OTHER, BUT WANTED ONLY TO HELP OUR THAI FRIENDS AND THEIR NEIGHBORS LIVE IN PEACE WITHOUT BEING FORCED BY EXTERNAL PRESSURE TO CHANGE THEIR BASIC FORMS OF GOVERNMENT OR ATTITUDES. BY CONTRAST, THE PRC BELIEVES IT CAN ESTABLISH GOOD STATE-TO-STATE RELATIONS WITH OTHER NATIONS, BUT AT THE SAME TIME PULL THE RUG FROM UNDER THEM BY FOSTERING "WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION". THE SOVIET UNION, WHICH SUBSCRIBES TO THE THEORY OF "INEVITABLE REVOLUTION", WANTS TO GAIN A DOMINANT POSITION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. THIS IS NOT IN THE INTERESTS OF THAILAND OR OTHER LITTORAL NATIONS, AND WE ARE TRYING TO PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING. IN MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA, THE PROBLEM IS NORTH VIETNAM WHICH IS TRYING TO CHANGE

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THE SITUATION IN THE AREA BY MILITARY MEANS. I SAID OUR OBJECTIVE WAS TO HELP THAILAND THROUGH THIS PERIOD IN WAYS WHICH WERE POSSIBLE FOR US AND ACCEPTABLE TO THE THAI PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT. ONE ENCOURAGING SIGN WAS THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASEAN. I SAID WE FULLY SYMPATHIZE WITH THIS CONCEPT, BUT WE BELIEVE REGIONAL COOPERATION CAN BEST BE PUSHED BY THE NATIONS OF THE AREA THEMSELVES RATHER THAN FROM OUTSIDE FORCES.

TEMCO.

9. TURNING TO THE TEMCO DISPUTE, I TOLD PICHAI THAT I HAD BRIEFED THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE EFFORTS BY STUDENTS AND OTHER VOCAL GROUPS TO TERMINATE TEMCO'S TIN MINING CONCESSION AND HAD FOLLOWED THIS BY SENDING SENI A LETTER SETTING FORTH MY VIEWS IN GREATER DETAIL. I SAID WE HAD INVESTIGATED THIS MATTER FULLY AND WERE CONVINCED THAT TEMCO HAS A VALID CONCESSION AND THAT IT HAS FOLLOWED THAI LEAD. I TOLD PICHAI IT IS UP TO THAILAND TO DECIDE HOW TO DEVELOP ITS OWN RESOURCES, BUT HE MUST BE AWARE THAT PUNITIVE ACTIONS AGAINST TEMCO WOULD BE MOST UNFORTUNATE IF THAILAND WANTED OUTSIDE DEVELOPMENTAL INVESTMENT. PUNITIVE ACTIONS WOULD HAVE A HIGHLY ADVERSE IMPACT ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT, WHICH IS CRUCIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE CURRENT FIVE YEAR PLAN, AND WOULD ALSO CREATE SERIOUS PROBLEMS BETWEEN THAILAND AND THE UNITED STATES SINCE TEMCO HAS AN OPIC GUARANTEE FOR PART OF ITS INVESTMENT.

10 PICHAI SAID THIS WAS A "HSDACHE". AS A BUSINESSMAN HIMSELF, HE FULLY AGREED WITH MY COMMENTS. HOWEVER, THE SITUATION REGARDING TEMCO WAS EXTREMELY "DELICATE". THE CABINET HAD NOT REACHED A DECISION ON THIS MATTER BUT HAD DECIDED THAT IT REQUIRED ADDITIONAL STUDY. NOW THAT THE DEMOCRAT-SOCIAL AGRARIAN CABINET WAS LEAVING OFFICE, IT WOULD TAKE NO FURTHER ACTION.

COMMENT:

11. I HAVE KNOWN PICHAI BEFORE, AND THIS MEETING CONFIRMED MY IMPRESSION THAT HE IS PLEASANT, HIGHLY ARTICULATE, KNOWLEDGEABLE AND SELF-CONFIDENT. I DOUBT THAT HE HIMSELF
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WAS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE 18-MONTH DEADLINE FOR WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. MILITARY FORCES, ALTHOUGH HE PROBABLY SUPPORTED SENI'S COMPROMISE DECISION DESCRIBED IN PARA 2 ABOVE. PICHAI WAS KEENLY AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE TO THE DEMOCRATS OF SUPPORT FROM THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND, AND REALIZED, OF COURSE, HOW STRONGLY THE SPT FELT ON THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL ISSUE.

12. AS FOREIGN MINISTER IN THE DEMOCRAT PARTY SHADOW
CABINET, AND PROBABLY SENI PRAMOT'S HEIR APPARENT AS PARTY
LEADER, PICHAH IS A COMER AND VERY MUCH A MAN TO WATCH IN
THE FUTURE. WHILE A DEDICATED THAI NATIONALIST, I BELIEVE
HE IS A GOOD FRIEND OF THE UNITED STATES AND WILL DO WHAT
HE CAN TO ASSIST IN KEEPING U.S.-THAI RELATIONS ON AN EVEN
KEEL DURING THE CURRENT PERIOD OF TRANSITION.
KINTNER

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